

PM meets Koirala, discusses ways to boost bilateral ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday met his Nepalese counterpart Sushil Koirala and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in key sectors like trade and investment, hydropower and agriculture. Modi, who arrived here on Sunday morning on his maiden official visit to Nepal, met Koirala at Singha Durbar Secretariat. The two leaders discussed various facets of longstanding mutual relations and issues of common interest.

Rousing welcome Earlier, Modi, the first Indian Prime Minister to pay a bilateral visit to Nepal in 17 years, was given a rousing welcome with his counterpart receiving him at the Tribhuvan International Airport, deviating from protocol for the purpose. Deputy Prime Ministers Bam Dev Gautam and Prakash Man Singh were also present at the airport. Nepalese Foreign Minister Mahendra Pandey paid a courtesy call on Modi and briefly discussed some bilateral issues, including hydro-power, trade, energy and security. "The talks were held in a very cordial and friendly atmosphere," Pandey said. Modi, in his pre-departure statement summing up the sentiment attached to the two-day trip, had said, "I am excited about my visit and pleased that I am able to go there within weeks of assuming office as Prime Minister." Modi had said that he looks forward to working with the Nepalese leadership to forge a "new relationship" by identifying steps to strengthen bilateral cooperation in key sectors, including trade and investment, hydropower, agriculture and agro-processing, environment, tourism, education, culture and sports. PTI

Rights of farmers protected at WTO: Jaitley

GAURAV VIVEK BHATNAGAR

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said that the NDA Government would continue to take "firm decisions for the welfare of the country" and added that the results of the decisions already taken would start showing within the next few months. He also spoke about how the Government has protected the interests of the small farmers during negotiations at the World Trade Organisation. Addressing a discussion on the "Budget" with representatives of the residents' welfare associations, organised by the Delhi unit of the party, Mr. Jaitley also spoke about how no new taxes were imposed in the Delhi Budget in Parliament so that the common man was not burdened any more. The Minister also noted that work was being done to improve the power supply in the Capital city. "Our Power Minister is working hard," he said, adding that a power subsidy has been provided in the Delhi Budget to benefit 84 per cent of the households. To place more money in the hands of the common man, he said the Union

Budget had also raised the exemption limit of income tax from Rs.2 lakh to Rs.2.5 lakh. Mr. Jaitley said the Central Government was now working towards expanding the reach of the banking services by going into the villages. He said this would immensely benefit the rural population of the country too. In this regard, Mr Jaitley also mentioned how the Union Government has stood firm in the World Trade Organisation negotiations, in the wake of severe pressure from the developed countries, to safeguard the interests of the farmers. He said had the Government followed in the footsteps of the UPA Government, the interests of the farmers would have been compromised. "For us, the interest of farmers is paramount. There was a lot of pressure, but the government decided not to compromise the interest of poor farmers," he said. The BJP meet also decided to use social media and RWA forums to take its government's achievements to the people. Delhi State in-charge Prabhat Jha said organisational activities in Delhi have gathered momentum in the last few weeks. He said efforts were being made to highlight the programmes and achievements of the government through social media and RWA meetings. Delhi BJP president Satish Upadhyay said the party would mobilise the cadres to go from door to door to tell the people about the achievements of the BJP Government at the Centre.

"Results of the decisions... would start showing within the next few months"

Water level rising in Periyar, Vaigai dams

Farmers raise nurseries and start transplanting work



Workers engaged in paddy transplanting in the Cumbum valley in Theni district.—
FILE PHOTO

Water level rose up substantially in Periyar and Vaigai dams on Sunday bringing cheers to farmers in Cumbum valley and relief to local body officials. The storage level is steadily increasing in Periyar dam owing to heavy inflow in the wake of torrential rain in catchments areas, Western Ghats and in Idukki district in Kerala. The level in the dam stood at 121 feet with a massive inflow of 2,211 cusecs. To capitalise the heavy inflow into Periyar dam, Public Works Department (PWD) officials have

stepped up discharge to 1,167 cusecs to improve storage in Vaigai dam and to meet drinking water supply and irrigation needs of the southern districts. With comfortable storage in Periyar dam, farmers in Cumbum valley have raised nurseries and started transplanting work. The storage level in Vaigai dam has also been rising steadily. The water level stood at 39 feet in the dam. The inflow was 882 cusecs and the discharge 40 cusecs. Farmers hope that the comfortable storage will encourage PWD officials to release water for irrigation of crops in over two lakh acres in Dindigul, Theni and Madurai districts. There were heavy rains in the catchments of Periyar dam on Saturday night. The sky was overcast in Dindigul district on Sunday.

Water level in KRS touches 118.9 feet



The water-level of Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir near Srirangapatna in Mandya district rose to 118.90 ft. at 6.30 p.m. on 03 August, 2014. The water-level in Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir near Srirangapatna touched 118.9 ft. on Sunday. According to Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd. officials, while the inflow into the reservoir was at the rate of 41,319 cusecs, the outflow was at 20,499 cusecs. The full reservoir level is 124.8 ft. Meanwhile, water-level of the Hemavati reservoir at Gorur in Hassan district touched FRL. The Mandya district administration has issued a flood alert to villages situated along the Hevamati in K.R. Pet taluk. The district administration is prepared to tackle the situation and has alerted those residing in low-lying areas about a possible flood, B. Vani, Assistant Commissioner (Pandavapura Sub-division), said.

Egg rate improves by 10 paise

EGG RATE IMPROVES

After the wholesale price of egg in Namakkal Zone dropped by Rs. 1.03 in July, the price improved by 10 paise and stood at Rs. 2.70 on Saturday. Statistics from the National Egg Coordination Committee revealed that the price of egg dropped regularly over the month due to drop in consumption. On July 1, the wholesale price of egg was Rs. 3.63 and dropped to Rs. 3 on July 17. It further dropped to Rs. 2.60 on July 31. Sources said that upward price movement was expected in the coming days due to rains in North India and also due to conclusion of festival season.

The wholesale price of broiler has also improved from Rs. 70 on July 1 to Rs. 89 on July 31. The price of broiler has improved steadily over the month due to increase in demand., statistics revealed.

“Cultivation of Kuthiraivali will bail out farmers”

PRAVEEN PAUL JOSEPH

It will enable farmers to overcome persistent drought

Cultivation of kuthiraivali, a minor millet crop, will certainly enable farmers to overcome persistent drought in Tuticorin district. With less water, the minor millet, an ideal healthy dish with high fibre content, could be raised in 90 days either on dry land or wasteland. Since black cotton soil in the district is conducive to this crop yield, the average cultivation of kuthiraivali is 120 hectares here, according to Joint Director of Agriculture, N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy, Tuticorin. Efforts are on to boost production of this conventional minor millet under the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water Bodies Restoration and Management Project. Nowadays in this modern era many people resorted to fast food, instant food and junk food, which are unhealthy. But health conscious people had started consuming minor millets in the form of value added food items or drinks. Currently, obese people and diabetics had been following this traditional diet so as to lead disease-free life. Hence, the farmers should capitalise on this situation, he said. The Department of Agriculture has launched an initiative to familiarise this minor millet cultivation through field demonstrations at villages conducive to growing conditions. As many as 267 field demonstrations would be done in the district, the Joint Director told *The Hindu* here on Sunday. Farm inputs, including high yielding seeds, fertilizer, bio-fertilizer and micro-nutrients worth Rs.4,000 would be given to farmer free of cost after the demonstration. Self-help group members had also been involved in preparing delicious food items such as biscuits, halwa, dosa and other eatables with kuthiraivali as a key ingredient in some districts. He said this minor millet could withstand drought-prone conditions up to 30 to 40 days during its growth period. “After incurring an expenditure of Rs.2,500 to Rs.3,000 per acre, the crop is expected to raise up to five quintals and on a hectare wise, it will fetch prospective returns of 1,250 kg. Its market value is between Rs.40 and Rs.50 per kilo”, Mr. Dhakshinamoorthy said. He

said kuthiraivali contains fibre, protein, fat, potassium, carbohydrate, calcium, iron and other healthy ingredients. Since farmers in Tuticorin district are entirely reliant on the northeast monsoon, which is expected in October, the farmers can sow anticipating showers. Among 12 blocks, seven blocks, including Kovilpatti, Vilathikulam, Pudur, Kayathar, Ottapidaram, Pudukottai and parts of Karungulam were relying on rainfed cultivation, he said.

Paddy growing competition for farmers

The Department of Agriculture has invited applications from farmers for participating in State, district and taluk level paddy growing competition for the 2014-15 kharif season.

Prizes

At the State-level, the first prize will be Rs. 50,000, second prize Rs. 25,000 and third prize Rs. 15,000. At the district level, it will be in the order of Rs. 25,000, Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 10,000. At taluk level, it would be Rs. 15,000, Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 5,000, an official release said. The objective of the competition is to make farmers increase the productivity on the available land.

Entrance fee

From the State level, there would be an entrance fee of Rs. 300, Rs. 150 and Rs. 100, respectively. Those who would like to participate in the competition should have grown paddy in at least on an acre (0.40 hectare).

Screening

The entry of those who have grown more than 50 quintals of paddy per hectare would only be considered for screening for the award. Last date to submit applications is August 31. Details could be had from the offices of the department or Raita Samparka Kendra.

It is to help farmers increase productivity on available land

Farmers' meet

The Kerala Agricultural University and Doordarsan will hold a farmers' meet at the KAU Central Auditorium on Tuesday. P.V. Balachandran, KAU Director of Extension, said the programme was aimed at creating awareness about modern trends in agriculture. KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran will inaugurate the meet. T. Chamiyar, Deputy Director General, Doordarshan, will preside.

Poultry will be recognised as part of farming sector: KCR



There are about 25,000 poultry units across Telangana.— file photo

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday assured a delegation of the poultry industry that called on him that the State government would positively examine their request to recognise poultry as part of agriculture sector. The delegation led by Telangana Broilers Association president G. Ranjith Reddy and Hyderabad Layer Farmers Association president K. Mohan Reddy explained to the Chief Minister that poultry units were suffering severe losses due to heavy increase in all input costs including power and feed (maize). They requested the Chief Minister to extend a helping hand as lakhs of families were depending on it for employment. Responding to their pleas, the Chief Minister told that the government had information that about 25,000 poultry units were there across the State and the problems of the industry would be sympathetically examined. Finance Minister Etala Rajender was also present. When contacted, Mr. Mohan Reddy stated later that they had made some specific requests to the Chief Minister on power charges as Rs. 8.70 per unit was being collected from poultry units against Rs. 1.80 to Rs. 2.50 per unit in other States. The Chief Minister agreed to give 50 per cent subsidy on what the industry was being charged now. Further, the Chief Minister had agreed that the Markfed would supply maize stocks available with it at Rs. 11 per kg against Rs. 13 per kg being planned to be sold by it to others. The government agency had 2.86 lakh tonnes of maize with it now, Mr. Mohan Reddy said. On the import of chicken leg pieces from the US, they requested the Chief Minister to take up the matter with the Centre to stop it as it would adversely affect the local industry which was already in trouble. He said there were about 6.5 crore broiler, layer and breeding birds in Telangana and income wise it was in fourth position in the world.

Water level at Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 84.89 feet on Sunday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 31,543 cusecs and the discharge 2,800 cusecs.

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Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Aug 4

Max Min

36° | 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 75

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:54

Sunset: 06:35

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Aug 5

Max Min

36° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Aug 6



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday

Aug 7



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

Aug 8



36° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Aug 9



36° | 27°

Cloudy

Sunday

Aug 10



35° | 27°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:43

Humidity: 79

Sunset: 07:10

Wind: normal

Barometer: 998



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Farmers Suffering a Lot with 57 pc Deficit Rainfall in Adilabad District



Due to delay in monsoon, seeds sown twice have not germinated and those sown for the third time are now in feeder stage. With prevailing dry spell conditions expected to continue, farmers do not hope for good yield. The cultivation is yet to start in 1.64 lakh hectares. According to agriculture officials in the district, various crops are cultivated in an extent of 6.50 lakh hectares. Cotton is cultivated in 3.50 lakh hectares, soyabean 1.50 lakh hectares, paddy 48,000 hectares and in the rest, other pulses are cultivated. But due to drought conditions the farmers cultivated crops in only 4.86 lakh hectares, with cotton in 2.88 lakh of hectares, soyabean in 1.06 lakh hectares, paddy in 2000 hectares. The district still not received normal rainfall of 547.2 mm. On date the district received 238.4 mm, 57 per cent deficient. 39 out of 52 mandals have received scanty rainfall (not received 50 per cent rainfall). Last year the district had 1054.4 mm against the normal of 547.2 mm, 48 per cent excess. Many small farmers in the district depend on rainfall during the farm operations. Their helplessness was evident during 2009 when some farmers in drought-affected areas were not guided properly about the seed materials, sowing operations and alternative approaches. This

year the awareness programmes began in the second week of July after the first phase of sowing operations completed. The rabi season which normally begins in October, would also be affected. Only if the rains come this month as well as September will there be any recovery, at least marginally from the losses. Low or negligent rainfall has meant that soyabean, paddy as well as cotton could not be sown in a large area and also whatever yeild will be below expectations. Rainfall has been scanty in 39 mandals as a result of which the district is facing the twin crises of drought and drinking water shortage. Speaking to Express farmer Atram Devidas of Tamsi mandal said crops damaged last year due to heavy rains and floods. He had sown seeds in the second week of August but got the expected yield because sufficient water was available for the crops. His cultivate land is on the banks of the Penganga river. However, he said this year due to drought conditions, the seeds sown for the second time also have not germinating and whatever seeds that germinated are now dying because of lack of proper rains. If rains continue till September, then he expects some yield to minimise losses. He said this year it will be a month delay for the harvest season. He pointed out that compared to last year the yield will be reduced two to three quintals of cotton as well as soyabean per acre. Last year he got 8 quintals per acre on average. He also said that the water availability situation is tricky. Absence of rain in the coming months means that farmers will not be in a situation to use fuel-run oil engines to irrigate crops. Padmakar Reddy, another farmer said that late monsoon will not affect the supply of food grains to consumers, although a rise in the prices of pulses and cooking oil remains a possibility. Agriculture Joint Director Rojleela said that awareness programmes should be conducted in every village on the drought conditions and cultivation of less rainfall requiring crops.

Drough-hit Karimnagar Farmers Mull the Option of Irrigated Dry and Inter Crops

It seems Rain God does not have mercy on the farmers of the district as there are not enough rains to bring cheer on the faces of the farmers, waiting with hopes for the change in the situation. Giving up hopes for a regular crop due to delay in Monsoon, farmers have decided to take up inter crops and irrigated dry (ID) crops. The district, a predominantly paddy cultivating zone, had registered a significant deficit in rainfall

till date. In July normal rain fall is 283.6 mm but reported only 165.1 mm, which was the showers received during last 16 days. In August during the last four days, 15 mm rain was received. Almost all the paddy farmers lost hopes on their regular paddy cultivation, and thinking of other crops suitable in the present weather conditions. According to Agriculture department reports, major crop paddy transplantation was completed in 75,000 hectares as against 1,63,574 hectares where ground water is available under tanks and agriculture wells. Paddy cultivation may drop down drastically when compared to last year Kharif season. About 2.13 lakh hectares cultivated in the last kharif season. In view of continued dry spell in 57 mandals in the district, upland areas farmers took up inter crops. In the upland areas like Husnabad, Illanthakunta, Sircilla, Elkathurthy, Bheemdevarapalli farmers are now cultivating Red-gram, Castrol and Soybean crops as inter crops in their cotton and maize crops. SRSP canal which irrigates nearly 2 lakh acres in the district has not yet received water from Sriram Sagar Project in Nizamabad. The canals look like deserts. Once filled with rain water or upstream water of Maharashtra state, project water benefits Nizamabad, Karimangar, Adilabad and Warangal districts farmers. Agriculture Department Joint Director B Prasad told this paper that they are motivating farmers to cultivate Irrigated Dry (ID) crops and inter crops. Showers are almost covering 15 to 20 mandals every day but such showers benefit ID and inter crops only, he said. There is no shortage of fertilisers and seeds, but the shortage of rains had come as an obstacle for the cultivation of regular crops. He suggested to the farmers to take up paddy sowing operations till August 15. In the normal cropping area of 5,18,349 hectares, 90 per cent is going towards Irrigated Dry Crops only. Soybean sowings have been already completed. Whatever rainfall is being received in the district at present will benefit cotton, maize and other ID crops, Joint Director explained. With the showers there would be no wastage of fertilisers and seeds. In the last kharif season seeds got washed away and fertilisers were used more than requirement. Now such situation will not be repeated, fertilisers usage would be minimum and it is good time to weeding out, experts said.

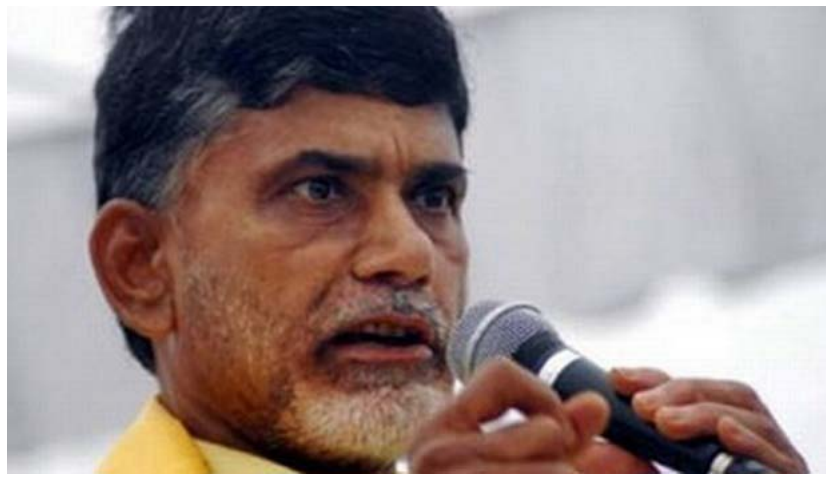
Meagre Rain Mars Paddy Cultivation



Due to low pressure in the Bay of Bengal, the district is now receiving some rains, which is helpful to the farmers only for cultivating cotton and irrigate dry crops but they can not cultivate paddy and other traditional crops normally taken up during Kharif. Some of the farmers who have completed plantation also are expecting good rains and now with rains making their presence felt, they are happy. However, officials say that whatever rains being received in the district now is no way helpful for paddy cultivation and advise the farmers to take up alternative crops to save themselves from losses. As per the assessment made by the agriculture department, the cultivation of paddy in the district has been recorded at 12 percent only, a marked low intensity of cropping due to lack of proper rains in last two months. As per the records, the total rainfall received in the district from June 1 to August 2 was 113.5 mm against a normal rainfall of 271.7 mm. Which is a deficit of 58.2 percent. According to sources, due to delay in transplantation of paddy, the crop yield will be reduced by three to four bags per acre. In view of the above the present price of paddy will go up at least by 50 per cent. Farmers who are raising crops under bore wells have already started operations under the ayacut area and thinking of going in for plantation after water release from the Nagarjunasagar dam. Those without water source are also thinking of plantation expecting water release from Nagarjunsagar. It has been a practice for several years for farmers to depend on August rains which are normally heavy and farmers are hopeful of bountiful rains during this month this year also. Previous record shows that Nagarjunasagar water was released on August 20 in 2004,

on August 1 in 2006, on July 21 in 2007, on July 27 in 2011, on July 11 in 2012 and on August 2 in 2013. When compared to last year, the maximum water level capacity in Nagarjunsagar was 522 feet and the present level is 513 feet. Due to insufficient rains the cultivation land was also decreased and the government is encouraging cultivation of irrigated dry (aru thadi) crops and therefore the officials of agriculture department are conducting special drive to motivate the farmers in this direction. The officials are also encouraging farmers to plant maize, castor, red gram, lobia (bobbarlu), groundnut and sunflower crops and simultaneously, they are taking steps to make the seeds available. The said seeds are being sold to the farmers at subsidised rates, keeping in view the low rainfall in the district. District collector T. Chiranjeevulu has passed order to the officials of agriculture department to focus more on ID crops so that farmers can get maximum returns.

Crop Loan Reschedule: Babu Blames RBI's Hard Stance on Previous Govt



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was reluctant to reschedule the crop loans in Andhra Pradesh, chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu told district collectors of his state on Saturday. "The Congress government in the erstwhile united state had not sent report to the Centre on the calamity-hit mandals within the stipulated time to avail the facility of rescheduling of crop loans. Because of this, the apex bank is not showing much interest to reschedule crop loans now," he said. The chief minister, however, told the districts' officials that his government was still awaiting a final word from the RBI on the matter. Once the RBI made its stance clear, the government would finalise the modalities of the farm loan waiver scheme, he said. While reviewing the status of

ongoing projects and implementation of various schemes across the state with respective district collectors through a video conference from Lake View Guest House here, the chief minister said that talks were still on with the RBI over rescheduling of crop loans. "Once the talks reach a decisive stage, modalities can be worked out. We have decided to waive crop loan up to Rs 1.50 lakh for each family across the state. We will very soon implement the scheme," he said, adding that by waiving Rs 1.50 lakh for each family, the government can relieve 96.5 per cent of farmers (who had availed a loan of up to Rs 1.5 lakh) of the crop loan burden. The chief minister explained to collectors how the government was trying to mobilise financial resources by pledging government's assets to banks so as to implement the loan waiver scheme in an effective manner. He asked collectors to ensure that bankers took the required steps to waive crop loans and issue fresh loans to farmers.

INPUT COSTS: He also asked the district collectors to bring down the input costs in agriculture and simultaneously increase output with the available resources. Stating that paddy was being cultivated in 17.60 lakh acres in the state, he asked the officials to ensure that farmers receive required quantities of fertilisers. He also asked the officials to create an awareness among farmers on use of bio-fertilisers which would bring down the input costs and increase agricultural production. For bio-fertilisers, he asked the district officials to make suggestions for creation of a bio-fertiliser lab. Apart from loan waiver, other issues that figured in the conference were strengthening of the education system and streamlining of public health services.

PUBLIC HEALTH: Reviewing the public health services, the chief minister asked the collectors to ensure that outbreak of diseases was controlled through 100 per cent immunisation. Since the immunisation level in AP is below average at present, Naidu asked them to take steps to achieve 100 per cent immunisation. On infant and maternal mortality rates, he asked the departments concerned to bring down the IMR and MMR rates. Through Amruta Hastam programme, pre-natal and post-natal services should be delivered effectively. He also asked the collectors to link the scheme to Aadhar. He asked the officials to focus on construction of individual and community toilets. Emphasising the importance of education, he told the collectors to ensure 100

per cent enrolment of students under the 'Badi Pilustondi' programme. He also proposed that the scheme be linked to Aadhar. The collectors presented status reports to Naidu on issues affecting their respective districts. 'Polam Pilustondi' programme, the chief minister asked district collectors to visit villages twice a week on Tuesday and Wednesday for three months from now. On each day of the visit, collectors will tour two villages and educate farmers on modern technologies which can be incorporated to make agriculture a profitable profession.

When Rain Fails, Use Waste Water for Irrigation, Advises Israeli Expert

While major dams in the state are holding water to their maximum capacity, at least 10 districts are still facing prospects of drought owing to deficit rainfall in the past two months. From June to July, 67 taluks in districts such as Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur and Yadgir have recorded deficit rainfall in the range of -20 per cent to -59 per cent of normal rainfall, according to Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre. Is there hope for rains? The latest agromet advisory issued by the Meteorological Department says: "No significant change." With natural water resources failing, the state could look up to Israel, a country that has used various techniques to counter drought in the past five decades despite its terrain being 60 per cent desert. Israel's climate is Mediterranean, with precipitation levels as high as 1,000 mm in the north and as low as 30 mm in the south. While it rains mostly during winters, the farmers have to irrigate during the remainder of the year. Director of Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research of the Ben-Gurion University in Negev desert, Israel, Pedro Berliner, gives an insight on how irrigation is carried out with little rain. "Over the last 50 years, what has been done is to improve the way water is applied to crops to minimise its use and increase the yield at the same time. Importantly, 80 per cent of Israel's urban waste water is treated and reused for agriculture and more than half of the water used today for agriculture is this," the dryland agriculture expert told Express. This method, Berliner said, has added considerable volumes of water to Israel's irrigation schemes, besides adding to a small list of available water resources that includes a large reservoir in the lake of Galilee, where water is stored and conveyed throughout the country. "Quite a number of the urban wastewater treatment plants are closer to smaller cities and locally used. This is

an approach that I think would increase the amount of water when natural underground and surface water resources are not enough,” he added. Trickle or drip irrigation plays a great role in increasing the efficiency of water application, which if done properly, can ensure the best conditions for plant development and maximum yield. Interestingly, the farmers in Israel have a solution to the problem of drip irrigation water evaporating. “When you water a crop, you are also watering the soil surface and water will evaporate. The water that is lost directly to the atmosphere is of no use to the crop as it does not reach the roots. We have developed a simple yet efficient technique, in which the area between the rows of crops are covered by materials with different chemical properties in order to decrease the amount of water lost due to evaporation, thereby increasing water use efficiency,” he said. According to a recent research paper authored by Dr Prodipto Ghosh and Dr Girija Bharat from The Energy and Resources Institute, the agricultural sector consumes over 80 per cent of the water resources in India, with irrigation efficiency at just 35 per cent. The paper also states that only 16 per cent of farmers are aware of irrigation efficiency techniques. Water is a property of the state in Israel, Berliner said. Water pumping policies are decided by government agencies and not individual farmers, ensuring that there is no drop in the water table. In Mandya alone, according to Registrar M B Rajegowda of University of Agricultural Sciences Bangalore, more than half of irrigation water is wasted. Asked if a similar legislation would work here, Berliner was cautious. “It would be best technically but may not be feasible politically,” he said. Israel has also taken the lead in desalination, a technique that allows farmers to use water directly from the sea by removing the salt content. Karnataka government has set aside `11,349 crore for major and minor irrigation projects, mostly based on river canals. Rajegowda welcomed the idea of using wastewater for irrigation, but lamented the lack of political will. “We need politicians who are willing to take such drastic measures. Another problem would be the initial investment. It would require creating channels and laying of pipes and so on. But it can certainly be done,” he added.

Arecanut Farmers Reap Rich Harvest

The price of arecanut from the state especially from central Kerala has reached an all-time high owing to high demand from North Indian traders, especially in Gujarat, for arecanuts produced in central Kerala. According to traders, of late, the arecanut export from Thrissur has reached record heights as there is a huge demand for arecanuts from Thrissur, which are now considered as superior in quality in terms of its aroma, taste and flavour than those from other markets, including Mangalore, which have been ruling the arecanut markets in the country down the decades. According to the statistics available with the Agriculture Department, the area of acreage under arecanut cultivation had been on a steady decline in the state until 2008-09. But from 2008-09, the area of acreage under cultivation and the production of nuts have been showing a steady increase in the state. If the total area under cultivation was 97,492 hectares in 2008-09, it has jumped to 1,01,775 hectares in 2012-13 and the latest figure projected by the department for the 2013-14 period is 1,02,085 hectares. Dr P Indiradevi, head of the Centre of Excellence in Environmental Economics (CEEE) of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), said, though the total area under cultivation increased on a steady pace, the total production of nuts from the state was not in proportion to the increase in acreage. If 1,25,654 tonnes of arecanut was procured and exported to north Indian markets in 2008-09, it has come down to 1,18,233 tonnes in 2012-13, which is believed to have increased the demand for areca nuts from the state of late, she said. Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (CAMPCO) regional head John Rodriguez said, this is first time in the state that the price of arecanut from Thrissur has reached record high of `325 per kg. Now it is hovering around `300/kg. The nuts from the Pazanji, Chalisherry, and Thrissur markets are on high demand in North Indian markets and a major chunk of the production is being transported to Gujarat, the main market for the superior quality nuts. While the medium-sized nuts from other parts of the state are being exported to Uttar Pradesh, Odisha is the main market of low-graded nuts produced from the state, he said.

Sugarcane institute bags award for agricultural research

Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI), Coimbatore has bagged the Sardar Patel Outstanding Institution Award for the year 2013. The award is in recognition of its performance among the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutions and contributions to agricultural research. Instituted by the ICAR, the award carries a cash reward of Rs. 10 lakh and a citation. Director of this century-old institute, NV Nair said the varieties developed by SBI were cultivated not just in several parts of India, but in many Asian and African countries as well. Co 86032 is the most popular sugarcane variety in the South and varieties such as Co 89003, Co 0238 and Co118, developed by the institute, occupy a predominant position in the North. Nair said the institute maintains the largest germplasm collection of sugarcane in the world.

12th Plan outlay for Coffee Board by month-end

Union Ministers have assured Karnataka coffee growers that the 12th Five-Year Plan for the Coffee Board would be announced by August end. In their meeting, coffee growers told Minister of Commerce Nirmala Sitharaman that the 12th Plan outlay for coffee is overdue by about two years and many small and large growers are eagerly awaiting the Plan proposals as they have held back some investments because of the impending notification. After patiently hearing growers' problems, she assured them that the notification will be made by the end of August. The growers also have urged Union ministers to revisit the Kasturirangan Report and remove plantations from the preview of the act for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, just as it has been done for Kerala. The members of the delegation that met the Union Ministers included D Govindappa Jayaram, chairman, and K Kurian, vice-chairman, of the Karnataka Planters Association; MS Jayaram, president, Thirthamalles, secretary, Nanda Belliappa and MS Boje Gowda of the Karnataka Growers Federation; Peter Mathias, president, and Ullas Menon, Secretary-General, United Planters Association of Southern India. The planters' delegation was in New Delhi from July 29 to August 1 to discuss issues with

Commerce Ministry officials and Nirmala Sitharaman. The delegation also met newly-elected MPs from Karnataka and apprised them on various issues. Pollution control norms for pulping were also brought to the ministers' attention. Growers urged them to consider studies done by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore. Ministers assured the delegation that SCTL for growers above 10 hectares would be looked into. They also said that recoveries of loans which have become non-performing assets and those before the Debt Recovery Tribunal would not be brought under the SARFAESI Act for any plantation lands.

Meetings

Nirmala Sitharaman suggested plans to have a meeting for all stake-holders of the coffee industry in Bangalore and for the Tea Industry in Guwahati. She also suggested that the Rainfall Insurance Plan will be modified to include all plantation losses caused due to heavy rainfall, drought or heavy pest attacks, such as white stem borer or stalk/bean/leaf rot (Koleroga) etc. She also said she would explore ways of including research scientists from the agricultural department for doing research on coffee, as well as getting some funding from the Agricultural Ministry for the same. The Ministers also assured help in getting the approval of the National Horticultural Package (for Pepper) for Karnataka.

Texas Tech researchers discover low-grade non-woven Cotton

Texas Tech University researchers have recently discovered that low-grade cotton made into an absorbent non-woven mat can collect up to 50 times its own weight in oil. The results strengthen the use of cotton as a natural sorbent for oil, Seshadri Ramkumar, Professor in the Department of Environmental Toxicology at Texas Tech, who led the research, said in a release, from the University. Ramkumar is the creator of Fibertect(r), a non-woven decontamination wipe developed by researchers at Texas Tech capable of cleaning chemical and biological agents. Vinitkumar Singh, a Doctoral candidate working under Ramkumar, performed experiments in the study and this multidisciplinary project involved scientists from Cotton Incorporated and Texas Tech's Departments of Mechanical Engineering and Environmental

Toxicology. In the four year project, scientists tried to create a fundamental understanding of the effect of fibre structure and basic characteristics of cotton on oil sorption capacity of unprocessed raw cotton. The work also examined the basic mechanisms behind oil sorption by non-woven cotton webs, he said. "We believe non woven cotton webs as oil sorbent have tremendous potential for application in real-time oil spill scenarios along with environmental sustainability and commercial acceptability," Ramkumar said.

Govt stance at WTO belies assurance on food security, says farmers' group

While some farmers organisations have welcomed the Narendra Modi Government's stance in World Trade Organisation, some others feel that the Government's actions do not match its words with regard to its stance on food security and farm subsidies at home. "We totally support the Government's stand on WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement. In fact, in a country like ours, agriculture should be totally kept out of the purview of WTO norms in future. This is because for lakhs of small and marginal farmers in India, agriculture is not merely a business, it is an integral part of their culture and means of subsistence," Yudhvir Singh of the Bharatiya Kisan Union, said. However, Left-backed All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) said the Modi Government had not taken an unambiguous stance on the issue of food security, procurement, public stock holding and the public distribution system (PDS) with regard to the negotiations at the WTO. "Contrary to the public posturing, the BJP-led NDA Government has threatened to stop procurement if States pay higher than the minimum support price (MSP) for foodgrains, especially wheat and paddy," AIKS said in a statement. Instead of increasing the crop basket under purview of the price support mechanism and enhancing the procurement network, the Agriculture Ministry and the Commission of Agricultural Costs and Prices have been pushing for pruning the list of crops from the existing list, it added. "Agricultural subsidies are being frozen and public food-stockholding is being progressively reduced, both of which will

endanger food security of the country and push farmers out of agriculture, intensify the agrarian distress and farmers' suicides that too at a time when other sectors are not able to provide employment for the displaced," the statement said. Alleging that the Government was "clandestinely" following the agenda of developed countries, AIKS said if the Government was committed to the cause of farmers and food security, public stockholding and price support, it must increase farm subsidies as well as announce remunerative MSP, increase procurement as well as expand the crop basket under price support. AIKS urged upon the Government to forge solidarity with Developing and Least Developed Countries to collectively secure safeguards for sovereign development policy space, food security and the livelihood concerns of farmers and its people.

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Trustea code to certify 17 gardens

ROOPAK GOSWAMI



Tea workers at a garden in Mariani. Picture by UB Photos

Around 30 million kg of tea from 17 gardens in Assam would be certified under the Trustea code by the year end which would not only improve the competitiveness of the gardens but also help them achieve compliance with national regulations and international sustainability standards. Two tea gardens in Assam have already

completed the Trustea verification process and the process is on in another 15. “The volume likely to be verified by Trustea from these gardens by the end of this year would be around 30 million kg,” said Gangan Boriah, who represents the Tea Board of India in the programme. Hindustan Unilever Limited and IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative is funding the programme. Solidaridad, a supply chain company, is the implementing partner for the programme. The two gardens in Assam that have completed the verification process are Sundarpur and Tyroon. An official of Sundarpur garden said the Trustea certification should go a long way in helping them achieve their sustainability goals. “Our surrounding ecosystem is strictly protected by the management and necessary training is being imparted to the workers at regular intervals. Native tree species are planted to conserve the biodiversity. Water quality is tested periodically to assess if there is any contamination because of our operations,” the official said. He said buffer zones have been created to avoid any pollution and contamination. Banned agrochemicals are totally avoided from being used. “Overall, our environmental performance has improved,” the official said. An official of Tyroon garden said the programme helped the company further its disaster management practice by working on a much-improved system. Regular training at the factory helps workers understand the urgent need to improve hygiene while working. This was enforced via a uniform changing room at the entrance of the factory and regular washing of hands on entry and exit of the factory. “We also improvised safer chemical application processes where the safety of workers is paramount. We now have a spraying squad who wear specialised gear to protect them from chemical contamination,” the official said. “It is expected that the compliance with the code not only improves competitiveness of the tea gardens but also facilitates them in achieving compliance with national regulations and international sustainability standards. The Indian tea code allows producers to show that they operate responsibly, producing quality tea according to strict social and environmental standards. The verification under the code provides manufacturers with the assurance of responsible production and provides opportunities to credibly demonstrate this to their customers,” an official with the programme said.



Fish breeding through open sea cages

Following its success in breeding fish in the high seas by installing open sea cages, fisheries department is considering the idea of commercializing the concept of breeding fish on a large scale. The cages were installed from November 2013 to January 2014 off Polem and Talpona villages of Canacona taluka, and 3 tones of fish was produced from ten cages earning a revenue of 5.8 lakh to the government, a official said. The fish was made available to the public. The fisheries department is also creating awareness about this new concept among fishermen as their new venture has proved quite rewarding. If required, a scheme will be formed to encourage fishermen.